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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8888
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 6103
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3322
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0595
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3537
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5258
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5951
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0569
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0927
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2018
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA SPY SCANDAL: POLICE CHIEF BACKS USG STANCE

REF: LA PAZ 374

Classified By: Acting EcoPol Chief Joe Relk for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Bolivian National Police (BNP) commander Miguel Vasquez testified before a Senate commission and refuted Minister of Government Alfredo Rada's espionage allegations against the Embassy and a USG-funded police unit. Vasquez rejected accusations that the unit did not report to him and confirmed that the unit did not carry out activities beyond its designated counter-narcotics mission. Despite Vasquez' testimony Rada announced on February 21 that he stood by his previous declarations, stating that at an opportune time he would provide documentation to support his claims. The opposition-controlled Senate appears poised to continue the investigations, and may look into another police intelligence unit, which does not receive USG funds. Meanwhile the Ambassador firmly rejected allegations by the former national intelligence chief that the Embassy "manages" many different intelligence groups and maintains records on all Bolivian citizens for the purpose of determining who qualifies for a U.S. visa. Vasquez's statements vindicate the Embassy's position and require Minister Rada explain his dubious allegations against the Embassy. End Summary.

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Police Chief Refutes Charges Against USG
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12. (U) Bolivian National Police (BNP) commander Miguel Vasquez testified before the Bolivian Senate on February 21 and negated many of Minister of Government Alfredo Rada's allegations that a USG-funded police unit conducted internal espionage. In contrast to Rada's numerous accusations and insinuation that the USG-funded Police Studies Organization (ODEP) spied on innocent Bolivian citizens, Vasquez stated "as far as I know, ODEP did its work as stipulated," meaning it performed intelligence on narco-trafficking groups. Vasquez also reiterated his earlier public statements that he never authorized any internal domestic spying. Vasquez stated, "These facts I know from media outlets, the press. There was never an order to perform this type of work."

13. (U) Vasquez also refuted Rada's claims that ODEP (also known by its predecessor acronym of COPES) only reported its findings to the U.S. Embassy, failing to notify the police hierarchy. Vasquez stated, "ODEP coordinated its work with the General Command. Its case reports -- inherent to the fight against narco-trafficking -- were (delivered) every three weeks, every month, but today (ODEP) has been disbanded." (Note: The unit was disbanded January 29. End Note). In contrast, Vasquez indicated that another police intelligence unit, known as the "Special Group" (GE) was not keeping him informed of its activities. During his February 20 Senate testimony, the former police intelligence chief intelligence Jose Luis Centellas acknowledged that the GE unit conducts internal surveillance of "organizations and institutions that put internal security at risk." Vasquez stated that he never "received" reports from the GE unit and was not familiar with the people who comprised the unit. He added that the Senate would need to speak to Centellas to obtain more information about GE.

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New Intelligence Unit Under the Microscope
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14. (U) With Police Commander Miguel Vasquez' testimony more or less absolving ODEP of wrong-doing and Centellas' testimony which indicated that GE was conducting internal surveillance, attention now has turned to GE. Opposition Senator Luis Vasquez (PODEMOS, La Paz), who is leading the Senate investigation into the domestic spying scandal, stated February 21 that he would convoke more police officials to testify. La Paz newspaper La Prensa states the officials will likely be from the GE unit.

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Rada Stands His Shaky Ground
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15. (U) Police Chief Vasquez' statements contradict many of Minister Rada's outlandish accusations against the USG and ODEP. Rada has repeatedly accused ODEP of acting outside the traditional intelligence structure. Rada has argued that COPES-ODEP's objectives were threefold: to conduct "political intelligence" gathering; to surveil individuals; and, to denigrate the police hierarchy, and the central government. Rada has also repeatedly stated that ODEP responded to Embassy's demands because of its USG funding. Despite Vasquez' testimony, Rada announced on February 21 that he stood by his previous declarations, stating that at an opportune time he would provide documentation to support his accusations.

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Ambassador Rejects "Big Brother" Accusations
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16. (U) The Ambassador on February 21 firmly rejected former National Intelligence Chief Jose Luis Centellas Senate testimony that the Embassy "manages" many different intelligence groups and maintains records on all Bolivian citizens for the purpose of determining who qualifies for a U.S. visa. The Ambassador stated, "These declarations by Centellas are completely false, they are not true. What I can say is that we have for decades supported a unit within the police, and this activity was transparent to the ministers and commanders of the police." The Ambassador added, "This unit only tried to help Bolivia in its efforts to train this country in the battle against narco-trafficking, . . . but all in coordination with the police."

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Comment
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17. (C) Police Commander Vasquez' testimony matched much of the February 20 testimony of former ODEP-COPES commander

Miguel Angel Rivera (ref). Both their declarations are consistent with the Embassy's public statements regarding our relationship with ODEP-COPES. We have on numerous occasions confirmed that the USG provided funding to ODEP-COPES, but that the Embassy has nothing to do with the domestic spying scandal. Vasquez and Rivera essentially vindicated the Embassy's position, and leave Minister Rada having to explain his dubious allegations against the Embassy and ODEP.

18. (C) The ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party appears uncomfortable with the investigation. MAS members have been calling into question Senator Luis Vasquez's impartiality in the investigation. The Senator has compared the domestic spying scandal to Watergate; members of the MAS argue that since Watergate brought down President Nixon, Senator Vasquez must be looking to take down President Morales. While Morales is almost certainly safe, Minister Rada is likely in the opposition's crosshairs. End Comment.
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